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THE
SOUTH AFRICAN
LABOUR PROBLEM.

Speech by

SIR GEORGE FARRAR, D.S.O.,

AT A MEETING HELD ON THE

EAST RAND PROPRIETARY MINES,

On March 31st, 1903.

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THE LABOUR QUESTION.

Speech by Sir GEORGE FARRAR, D.S.O.

THE BLOEMFONTEIN CONFERENCE.

ITS RESOLUTIONS DISCUSSED.

THE IMPORTATION OF ASIATICS.

A SERIOUS MEETING.

ON TUESDAY, MARCH 31, at the Driefontein Boarding-house a crowded meeting was held. It was convened by Sir George Farrar, who was one of the Delegates to the Bloemfontein Conference, and the announcement of the meeting had caused wide-spread interest. It was known that at this meeting the labour question would be discussed and special reference be made to the possibilities of the introduction of the Asiatic element. There must have been seven or eight hundred men, chiefly miners, present, and Sir George Farrar, who presided, invited on to the platform, in addition to those who already occupied it, all whose names were suggested by Mr. W. Mather, Secretary of the Miners' Union. But so large was the attendance that the platform had ultimately to provide accommodation for many others, and thus on the platform not only were supporters of the convener of the meeting well represented, but also Mr. Mather's supporters. Before the meeting began, Mr. Mather's party had been busy distributing leaflets, giving "Reasons why we don't want Asiatic miners," the leaflet concluding with the words: "When Asiatic miners are employed—no white man need apply." Sir George Farrar had a most respectful, attentive hearing, his preliminary remarks before the meeting proper manifestly having good effect.

The meeting was remarkable for the temperate tone adopted throughout, and the respectful hearing given to every speaker. There could not be the slightest doubt that the men as a whole felt deeply on the Chinese question, but Sir George Farrar's admirable tact converted what might have been an angry meeting into an obviously thinking one, and indeed the Chairman himself said at the close that the discussion had been a valuable one.

The Spirit of the Meeting.

Opening the proceedings, the CHAIRMAN said: Gentlemen, we don't commence before 7 o'clock, and before we start I want to tell you I am an Englishman, and "fair play is bonny play." (Applause.) Now, what I want to say is this: This meeting is open to all. (Applause.) I want free discussion, I want your criticism, and I want to learn from you; I give every man a guarantee if he stands up and opposes me it shall not be detrimental to his position on these mines. (Applause.) You have my word the whole of you. (Applause.) Now, I understand Mr. Mather is here—(applause)—and there may be one other gentleman representing the labour union. (Hear, hear.) Now, I want them to come on the platform and help me to see there is free discussion in every way—(applause)—and when I have finished I shall ask Mr. Mather to address you and also any other gentleman who wishes. Now, will Mr. Mather come on the platform? (Applause.)

Mr. Mather and others then went on to the platform.

SIR GEORGE FARRAR'S SPEECH.

SIR GEORGE FARRAR said: It is not the first time by any means that I have been here to speak to the mine employés and residents at this end of the Fields. I have been here previously in critical times when I have seen trouble ahead, trouble caused by misunderstanding or perhaps by misrepresentation. As you all know, I am one of the largest employers of labour on these Fields, and, therefore, it is my duty at the present juncture to take you thoroughly into my confidence, and to explain to you all the problems of the present and future labour difficulties, for with the solution of these problems your welfare is so closely identified. To you who reside in Boksburg, it is a pleasure to see so many of you present to-night, and it is needless for me to say that you cannot prosper unless these mines which surround your town also prosper. It is, therefore, your duty, with due regard to the interests you have at stake, to take an intelligent interest, and assist us to solve this very difficult problem.

I not only speak to this large gathering here this evening, but I hope the words I have to say will be carefully read by all working men on the Witwatersrand. I myself have no axe to grind, I have no ulterior motive to serve, and my only policy is to bring back prosperity to this industry, by assisting it to get to work at the earliest possible date. This I say with due regard for the welfare and protection of all you working men here, many of whom have fought in the war, and intend to make this country your home.

The Bloemfontein Conference.

As you have probably read in the papers, I have been to Bloemfontein as a delegate from this Colony, to attend the Bloemfontein Conference, a conference held for the purpose of discussing the Customs, Railway, and Labour questions, and other general subjects of South African interest. The Conference was under the presidency of our High Commissioner, Lord Milner, and to show you how fully all details were discussed, it was not until the third week of the conference that a decision was arrived at. I shall not worry you with the details of the discussions, but only give you the result. The result is that a Customs Union has been entered into, to date from July 1st, provided that the Convention be confirmed by the Parliaments of Natal and Cape Colony, and by the Legislative Councils of the Orange River Colony, Rhodesia, and this Colony. The outcome of this Customs Union will be that all Customs duties will be collected at the coast. Transit dues will be abolished, and the cost of collecting the duties will be charged to you at a reasonable rate. There will be a free interchange of South African products, except, I hope, in brandy, and there will be a material reduction to you in the rate of import duties. There will be a rebate of 25 per cent. of the duty on all British products and manufactures, but I am glad to say that the Mother Country is not asked to give us reciprocity in return, since on account of her present fiscal policy, it is impossible for her to do so. The same preferential treatment will be given to the other British Colonies, on condition that they give us the same in return.

The Cost of Living.

Now, at the Conference, the whole question of the enormous cost of living up here was gone into, and the great fight which took place was due to the representatives of this Colony insisting on a substantial reduction in the price of foodstuffs in order that the working man might be enabled to live far cheaper than at present. For instance, you know that it costs a man almost double as much to live here as it does in the United States. Well, I am very glad to say that the result of the reduction in railway rates (hear, hear) will be that the rates on groceries and foodstuffs will be materially reduced, and that also the rates on all building materials will be lowered. But I need not go further into the matter, because the details of the reductions have been made public. You will, therefore, see that our main effort at Bloemfontein was directed towards alleviating the position of our working classes here. At first we were offered an all-round reduction, and this we could have had, but we declined, saying that by far the greatest reduction must be on the cost of living, and, therefore, it is on this account that the freight of mining machinery and stores will not be reduced. The railway reductions and the Customs Union if confirmed by the various Parliaments, will come into force simultaneously on July 1st. To sum up the position, I think the result of our visit to Bloemfontein will be that you will be saved in taxation an amount of from £800,000 to £1,000,000 a year, half of which concession has been contributed by the Maritime States.

Cheap Food.

Now, to enable the storekeepers to give you the benefit of these reductions in groceries and foodstuffs, I think that copper coinage should be brought into circulation. My attendance at the Conference has, moreover, more than ever impressed me with the necessity for growing more produce in this Colony. The rainfall is more regular than in most parts of South Africa, and if we can only discover some artificial manure in the by-products of the mines or the dynamite factory, there is no reason why this Colony should not produce a large proportion of the mealies, vegetables, milk and butter required by this community. It is needless for me to tell you that if this Customs Union is ratified, it will become a great commercial union, a union which may, in time, extend after responsible Government has been given you, to a still greater union, uniting all the people in this country together in one great federation. Now, gentlemen, at the Conference, the representatives of the Maritime Colonies naturally fought for their own interests, but when they saw the justice of the claims of the Inland States, and when they recognised how much these States had suffered by the war, they gave way like statesmen, and practically yielded everything the Inland States asked for.

The Spirit of the Conference.

Although it was a great fight, yet the feeling was always of the best, and the two Premiers of the self-governing Colonies, Sir Gordon Sprigg and Sir Albert Hime, behaved in the fairest and most broad-minded spirit. I must also place on record the absolute fairness of Lord Milner; he stated that, in the Conference, he should regard the Transvaal, to all intents and purposes, as a self-governing State. Therefore, the unofficial members, as representing the Transvaal, were absolutely given a free hand in asking for what this Colony was justly entitled to, and from what we asked we never wavered, nor were we influenced at any time to give away what we considered to be our just rights. I would like here to say, that through all the negotiations the Orange River Colony behaved most loyally to the people of this Colony. They recognised that in one particular, that is on the question of railways, there was a community of interest, a community which I hope will last, and grow into an ever-increasing unity.

The Question of the Hour.

Now, gentlemen, we have finished the Customs question, which has, no doubt, been a pleasant subject to you, and we now come on to what has become, in the minds of some people through misrepresentation, an unpleasant subject. I refer to the question of native labour, and the question of alien immigration. The outcome of the deliberations of the Bloemfontein Conference on the labour question is embodied in the resolutions which were published last week. Now, I—like Mr. Mather—am distributing literature. (Here the resolutions passed at the Bloemfontein Conference were circulated in the meeting). On the

native labour question the experts who discussed the matter were Mr. Stanford, the Administrator of the Transkei, probably one of the most able men on native questions in South Africa; Mr. Moore, the Minister of Native Affairs in Natal; for the Orange River Colony, Mr. Blignaut, who was a member of the late Orange Free State Government; Sir Godfrey Lagden, your most able Administrator for Native Affairs of this Colony; and Mr. Taylor, the Administrator for Native Affairs in Rhodesia. Now, gentlemen, what do these men say? They say that forced labour, that is, the Government bringing pressure on natives to work for private enterprise, is out of the question, and that no civilised country will tolerate it. They hold that the evils of polygamy, of which so much has been said, are greatly exaggerated, and that through civilisation and the use of the plough, it has greatly decreased. There is also a strong opinion, especially in the upper states of Natal, that the natives should receive no political status, but this has been provided for by the Peace of Vereeniging, which makes it impossible for the native to receive any political status until such time as the new Colonies receive responsible Government. The Conference also confirmed the principle of total prohibition to natives of intoxicating drink, and, moreover, upheld the principle that the reservation by the State of land for the sole use of the native, protection from violence, and other advantages of civilisation, involved special obligations on his part to the State. This means that natives must pay a due proportion of taxation for the privileges of the protection and government they receive. Here, as you know, there is a poll-tax of £2 per head on every adult native, and £2 for every additional wife beyond one. This tax, if collected, will yield about £250,000 per annum, and, when compared with the current native wage, is, in my opinion sufficient. Some people are not satisfied, and wish to raise the tax to a much higher figure, with a system of rebate to those who will work a portion of the year, but this, to my mind, means nothing less than forced labour.

A Dangerous Sect.

I am told that any radical change in the laws relating to the natives in the self-governing States would certainly not be tolerated. There is already a very dangerous sect at work amongst the natives preaching seditious doctrines, especially in regard to their position in connection with the white man, and any radical legislation which would disturb the minds of the natives might probably incite them against the white man, only bringing in its wake trouble and unrest. For instance, civilisation amongst the natives is doing a great deal. It was pointed out that formerly in the Transkei, the natives only used blankets and red ochre, but that now both men and women largely wear clothes and boots, thereby contributing considerably to the indirect taxation of the country; moreover, as their wants increase, so must they necessarily do more work in order to satisfy them. It was, however, suggested that in order to improve the continuity of service on the Rand, we should induce natives to bring their families here. For instance, at the ports in Cape Colony, locations have been established

for boys at work there, which system largely increased their period of service. This plan, I think, if carried out here, would somewhat improve our supply, and the question is now under the consideration of Sir Godfrey Lagden as to whether it can be done.

The Native Population.

Let us now consider Resolution No. 6, which practically states that the labour supply in South Africa south of the Zambesi is not sufficient for your normal or future requirements, and that therefore fresh fields are necessary; also that all British possessions in South, Central and East Africa shall be thrown open to recruiting. Now, what is the population south of the Zambesi? The numbers compiled by the highest authorities in the country are as follows :—

Cape Colony	...	...	...	1,500,000
Basutoland	...	...	...	260,000
Natal	...	...	...	916,000
Orange River Colony	...	...	...	140,000
Transvaal (estimated)	...	...	...	800,000
Bechuanaland	...	...	...	130,000
Rhodesia	...	...	...	514,000
Swaziland (estimated)	...	...	...	130,000
Portuguese Possessions (estimated)	...	...	...	1,500,000
Total Men, Women and Children				<u>5,890,000</u>

I may here say that the Portuguese representative stated at Bloemfontein that their population is estimated at one million, but I have put it in at a million and a half, so that no one can say that this figure is under-estimated.

Supply South of the Zambesi.

The most liberal construction you could put upon this total is that possibly one in sixteen of men between 18 and 36 could be induced to work continuously outside their own territories, provided that the various Governments are able to collect fair taxation, and that there are proper facilities for recruiting throughout this vast territory. That is to say, although one in ten might come out for six months, my estimate of one in sixteen for twelve months' continuous work in the various towns, agricultural districts and industrial centres in South Africa is very liberal. This will probably give you about 370,000 natives for the whole requirements of South Africa south of the Zambesi. At the same time, you must not forget, in looking at these figures, that the native is not by nature an industrial worker, but an agricultural worker, and if he can engage in agricultural pursuits he vastly prefers this form of occupation.

The Rand Requirements.

The requirements of labour for the gold and coal mines of this district, and for Johannesburg and suburbs only, as lately compiled by the leading engineers, are as follows :—

STAMP MILLS.

Number of stamps working, Witwatersrand, February, 1903	2,975	
Number of stamps working, outside districts, February, 1903	145	3,120
Number of stamps working, Witwatersrand, 1899	5,970	
" " " outside districts ...	400	6,370
Number of stamps now erected	6,500	
" " in contemplation next 5 years	5,360	11,860

A stamp crushes about 4 tons per day.

Daily production with 11,860 stamps, 47,440 tons.

NATIVE LABOUR.

Supply To-Day—

Natives now employed on gold mines, Witwatersrand	53,375	
Natives now employed on coal mines, Witwatersrand	6,796	60,171

Supply Required Immediately—

Total requirements, gold mines, Witwatersrand to-day	141,250	
Total requirements, coal mines, Witwatersrand to-day	10,000	151,250

Deficiency in Supply To-Day—

Present shortage of labour, gold mines, Witwatersrand	87,875	
Present shortage of labour, coal mines, Witwatersrand	3,204	91,079

Supply Required 5 Years Hence—

Native labour required 5 years hence, gold mines, Rand	250,000	
Native labour required 5 years hence, coal mines, Rand	25,000	275,000

Labour Supply, Town and Suburbs, Johannesburg—

Number of natives employed, Johannesburg,	
to-day	35,000
Estimated number of natives required 5 years	
hence	60,000

It is impossible to form an estimate of the requirements of agricultural and outside industries in the Transvaal; these are to-day fairly heavy, and are likely to increase steadily.

Summary—

Deficiency of labour required to-day for coal and	
gold mines	91,084
Labour required 5 years hence for coal and gold	
mines, and Johannesburg and suburbs ...	335,000

Add to these the requirements of labour for the construction of the lines, as sanctioned by the Conference, which have been estimated at from 30,000 to 40,000 natives. To this again must be added the requirements, both agricultural and industrial, of the whole of South Africa.

When one considers the further absorption of labour by the army, police, railways, repairs to telegraphs, making good the ravages of war, to say nothing of the wants of the increased white population, one is driven to the opinion that there is almost the same amount of labour now working as before the war.

Rhodesia's Requirements.

With regard to Rhodesia, the requirements have been estimated by the President of the Chamber of Mines, and are as follows:—

SOUTHERN RHODESIA—

Able-bodied adult population	110,000
(total population 514,000)	

Present Labour Requirements—

Mines	16,335
Other Employment... ..	19,500
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	35,835

SHORT OF PRESENT REQUIREMENTS—

Mines	4,930
Other Employment... ..	2,500
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	7,430

Actually at work	28,405
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Of which 14,559 are local natives.

„ „ 13,846 „ outside „

28,405

N.B.—Out of 11,405 boys at work to-day on the mines, only 1,779 are local boys.

FUTURE REQUIREMENTS—

Mines	...	...	...	...	...	25,000	
Other Employment...	30,000	
							55,000

PLUS PRESENT REQUIREMENTS—

Grand Total	90,835
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It may be that these estimated requirements would be found excessive, as it may of course be possible to bring in more labour-saving machinery, but it must always be remembered that in labour-saving machinery the cost of maintenance, at the high rate of skilled labour that we shall always have to pay must be taken into consideration. Even making every allowance, it must be evident to all how inadequate the supply of labour is for the great and increasing demands of South Africa. Now, people have the opinion that natives do not work. Let us take some of the figures given by the South African authorities. For instance, in the Transkei with a population of 810,000, 80,000 natives now go out to work outside their territory to various industrial centres. Mr. Stanford hopes that this will be increased to 100,000.

Continuous Working.

He, however, states that these men only go out for six months in the year, so that for continuous work the above numbers must evidently be halved. Then we come to Natal, where everyone says the natives do not work. I understand that out of a population of 916,000, approximately 180,000 natives are workers for an average period of five months in the year, but it is estimated that only 18,000 of these go outside the boundaries of Natal. In addition, they have on order in India 17,000 indentured Indians. You will see, therefore, that the estimate of one in sixteen of the whole population being workers is a liberal estimate of the number of able-bodied men which can be counted on as labourers. That finishes the question of demand and supply of native labour south of the Zambesi.

The Recruiting Area.

I now come to the Conference Resolution No. 9, which advocates extending the recruiting area in South Africa and also across the Zambesi. This means that Natal, I hope, will become an open field for recruiting, and also Rhodesia, but in dealing with these countries, you must always bear in mind the figures I have given you, which show their own local demands, and when their railways are built, their demands will grow still further. South of the Zambesi, we still have German North West Territory. The Witwatersrand Native Labour Association have sent there and we might be able to obtain 1,000 natives, but the terms are so onerous, and as there will be no prospect of getting any more, this source of supply is therefore of little or no use. North of the Zambesi, we have sent to Mossamedes, the

Portuguese West Coast possession, and we find that the authorities are against our bringing labour here. Furthermore, we have enquired into the prospect of getting labour in Monrovia and Liberia. Again, we have received offers from Morocco. I am not sure these would be desirable natives of Africa to settle in this country. We have also enquired into the labour supply of Egypt, but we are given to understand that the supply is not sufficient for their local requirements. We then come to the districts of Uganda and British East Africa. I do not think that the population in these districts is what it has been represented to be, owing to tribal wars and the scourge of sleeping sickness. Moreover, when a country has spent £9,000,000 on a railway it also hopes to develop industries of its own and employ its own natives. In British Central Africa, we have received permission to recruit a thousand natives, and I hope we shall get eventually a certain number of men from this district, but if they are only to be engaged for one year, as stated in the press telegrams, then taking into consideration that we have to bring them down, teach them their work, and repatriate them, such a short contract I think would be of little use. I trust, therefore, that the Foreign Office will see its way to extend the terms of their engagement. We must remember also that in British Central Africa they are building a railway themselves, and they naturally require a certain amount of labour. We may, however, get a certain number of natives from this district, but any idea of obtaining a large supply will, I fear, be entirely out of the question. Finally, we have the Portuguese territories north of the Zambesi, from which I hope we shall some day be able to draw a supply, when law and order exist, but I may say that our last attempt at recruiting in this district terminated in the murder of two recruiters. You will, therefore, judge for yourselves what prospects there are of getting labour north of the Zambesi, and, at the same time you must always bear in mind that in years to come these countries will have their own industries, for which they will require a large amount of labour. I think now you will agree that I have exhausted the question of native labour supply.

Increasing the Wages.

Now, gentlemen, some of you say that there is plenty of labour in South Africa, others say that there is not enough, and probably many of you will say that we have not given it a fair trial; also that we made a great blunder in reducing the wages, and in creating the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association instead of allowing free recruiting, as in the days before the war. As to the reduction of wages, I have no defence to make. The only thing I can point out to you is, that had it been possible to keep wages down to a fair remuneration, it would have been better for the whole of South Africa, but still the question of supply and demand must ever be a factor in the case. We pay now the same wages as we did before the war, and if it is possible to get more labour, I am prepared to pay even a higher wage. (Hear, hear.) But you must always remember that if the

mines pay a higher wage, you also have to pay more for your kitchen boy, and the farmer has to pay more for his labourers, which, at to-day's rate of wages, makes farming an impossibility.

The Native Labour Association.

Now, as to the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association; you say that if we will only return to the old order of recruiting, we shall get plenty of boys. I must confess that this is not my opinion. I think the Association has had great difficulties to face, but my mind is quite open, and I say that as we were wrong about the scale of pay, so we may be wrong as regards this Association, and unless the present position changes very quickly, I for one would not oppose free recruiting in the same districts as before the war. What I want, however, to know is this: Once we have all been forced to admit that the demand is much greater than the supply—where are we going to look for labour? Supposing we raise our wages. Supposing free recruiting be re-established, and supposing even then we do not get labour, where do you propose that we should look? Now, I am quite at one with you when you say that we have not yet secured the maximum number of boys Africa can produce, but as I hear that the crops are in places a failure this year, and hence the natives will be forced to seek employment, we shall obtain a very fair idea of what labour this country can produce under the stress of circumstances. But supposing, after all, we do not get an adequate supply of labour, what are we going to do? Supposing we have unfortunately to look outside Africa for labourers, it would take at least 18 months to two years to bring them here, and should I be worthy of the position I hold as trustee for the enormous amount of capital invested here by shareholders, if I did not look at least 18 months ahead, and it is for this reason that we have sent competent advisers to make inquiries in the East.

A National Question.

Now, I come back to the opinion of the Bloemfontein Conference on the point. What did the Conference think? The Conference says that **the prosperity of the mines is not a Johannesburg question only; it is a question on which the whole of South Africa depends; that it is even a national question.** These mines are the largest gold producers in the world, and it appears absurd to think that they should be crippled for want of labour. Surely common sense says that if you cannot get labour in Africa, you must get it elsewhere, and get to work. Now, there is an insidious doctrine advocated by people in this community that you should use the labour supply of this country, but outside this you shall not go, and therefore you must regulate your output accordingly. That doctrine, gentlemen, which would mean ruination to us all, I am prepared to fight. Moreover, I think when Consols are down to 90, it is high time that people woke up, and began to realise the seriousness of

the position. If the Governments of these Colonies had money, it would be a different thing, but what is the position of this Government, finally, and those of all the Colonies of South Africa? This Government requires immediately £65,000,000; the Cape Colony requires money for all its railway extensions and Natal requires money. To go outside Africa; New Zealand requires money, Australia, suffering from drought, requires money, whilst in Great Britain the annual estimates of expenditure exceed the revenue, and, in addition to this, they will probably require large funds for the Irish Land Purchase Bill. No wonder money is scarce when the production and buying power of these fields has been stopped for three years, and when we consider the enormous cost of the war. Beyond these points, you have to look at the value of your mining investments. Shareholders have been very patient—will their patience last for ever, if the miserable doctrine of delay and declining to face the real position is allowed to prevail, in fact, if we absolutely shut the door to all labour supply from outside Africa? If this policy is pursued I indeed think that shareholders will be justified in realising their holdings, and seeking investments in less hampered securities.

Conclusions of the Bloemfontein Conference.

Now, all these vital questions the Conference realised. They concluded (Clause 8) that the native population south of the Zambesi does not comprise a sufficient number of adult males, capable of work, to satisfy the normal requirements of the several Colonies, and at the same time furnish an adequate amount of labour for the large industrial and mining centres. The Conference, therefore, after long discussion, finally passed the following:—

“This Conference is of opinion that the permanent settlement in South Africa of Asiatic races would be injurious, and should not be permitted; but that if industrial development positively requires it, the introduction of unskilled labourers, under a system of Government control only, by which provision is made for indenture and repatriation at the termination thereof, should be permissible.”

I may tell you that the question arose through the fact that it was desirable to have common legislation as to alien immigration into South Africa of both black and white. It was, therefore, at first proposed that Asiatic immigration into South Africa be permissible under Government control, provided, if possible, it be indentured and repatriated at the termination of the period of its engagement. Now, the resolution in this form I absolutely opposed. I have been in this country 25 years, and I have seen the evil of the Indians holding land and trading in competition with white people and on no account whatever would I be a party to any legislation that permitted this. You in Boksburg are agitating against Indians coming into the country, and against their trading and holding land. I am absolutely at one with you. There are 50,000 free Indians in Natal to-day; they are creeping in daily. We see them on the mines; we see them everywhere. I consider it imperative that the Government should legislate against their coming here, and, therefore,

I entirely supported and voted for the resolution in the present form, which was eventually carried. It means that, if Asiatic labourers unfortunately have to be brought into this country, they should be brought in under Government control, solely as unskilled labourers, prohibited to trade, prohibited to hold land or compete with any white man, and that they should be carefully indentured and repatriated at the termination of their engagement to the country from which they came. In fact, to make the rules more stringent, it is advocated that the date of the expiry of the indenture should terminate in their own country. Now, you Boksburg gentlemen, who have been agitating so much against the introduction of the Asiatic, if you support this resolution, I think that legislation, if carried out in terms of this resolution, will meet all your objections, with which I have always been in entire agreement. (Applause).

The Speaker's Views.

Now I come to one of the most important parts of my speech, where I have to explain my views to the workmen on these mines, and also to all the workmen on the Rand. Now, I may ask, how have these fields been built up? What have been the conditions of labour? They have been these: Skilled white labour, at high wages, has been employed in conjunction with unskilled coloured labour in the proportion approximately of one to eight. It is true that the wages of skilled men have been high, and in my opinion they will always remain high, because the skilled labour we require ranks with the best in the world. Now, since the war, we have been short of native labour, and, owing to that shortage and in order to assist some of those who so gallantly fought in the war, a large number of unskilled white labourers have been employed. This has been done as a temporary measure, with a view to assisting those who are unskilled to become skilled, and to find permanent employment. During the past six months there has been a great controversy on the question of unskilled white labour, and we have heard the usual cry of making this a white man's country; but we are used to the cry of those who, knowing nothing of this country, come to teach us our business which has taken us years to learn. At first they tell us we must send all our natives on to the land, and use nothing but unskilled white labour in their places. That would mean that only the richest mines on these fields would be able to work, even if the wages of the skilled workmen were reduced by one half. Then we have the cry, "You must use what black labour there is in the country, and make up with unskilled white labour." I think, as a temporary expedient, a certain amount of unskilled white labour can be used, but it will not solve the great problem you have in front of you. Supposing, for instance, unskilled white labour were to be largely used, it means that the price of your unskilled white labour is regulated by the price of your unskilled coloured labour; therefore, it means that we should have to find the cheapest class of unskilled white labour that would be prepared to compete. That means bringing labour into this country from all the sources of Europe. What

would be the inevitable result? Why, that this unskilled labour would very soon become skilled labour and compete against you. For my part, I am absolutely against indentured cheap white labour. Many of you were here before the war and bore the brunt of the very anxious times that we have been through and I say that if white labourers are to come into this country, let them come in on their own account.

A White Man's Home.

The whole country is open to the white man who wants to make this country his home. Let him, therefore, come in, not subsidised, but as a free agent, and compete in the open market for wages, which are always a question of supply and demand. You use to-day native coloured labour—and what are your special objections to bringing in unskilled Asiatic labour to make up the deficiency? They are these: that he might remain in the country, become a tradesman and compete against you, in which case you are afraid that you may see Asiatic carpenters, fitters, etc., in fact, Asiatics in all the branches of skilled trade. Now, what is my answer to this? My answer is, that it is quite possible to bring in Asiatic unskilled labourers properly indentured, solely under Government control (for instance, take the Trinidad Ordinance), and at the end of their contract to return them or repatriate them to the country whence they came, not letting a single man remain behind.

Restrictions on Asiatic Immigration.

They must come here solely as unskilled labourers and therefore, in order that your position may be perfectly secure, I would guarantee never to consent to any legislation on this question unless the following restrictions are insisted on.

Restrictions on Asiatic immigration, under a system of Government control only, which will be indentured and repatriated at the end of the contract. Any breach of the following restrictions to be punished by fine and imprisonment. (Applause.)

“No mining, trading, spirit, or other licence whatsoever shall be granted to any immigrant or to any other person on behalf of, or as agent or trustee for any immigrant, nor shall it be lawful for any immigrant to hold any land, buildings, or fixed property, *mijnpachts*, claims, or any right to minerals or precious stones either in his own name, or in the name of any other person on behalf of, or as agent or trustee for him, or be registered as a voter. (Cheers.)

“No immigrant shall be imported into this Colony otherwise than as an unskilled labourer, nor shall any immigrant be employed in, or undertake on his own behalf any work other than work ordinarily done by unskilled native labourers on mines in this Colony, and in particular and by way of enumeration, and not by way of limitation, no immigrant shall

carry on any of the following trades or occupations (that is to say) :— Carpenter, blacksmith, mason, electrician, bricklayer, fireman, amalgamator, assayer, miller, timberman, banksman, pumpman, platelayer, skipman, brickmaker, fitter, turner, or shopman generally, engine driver, wire splitter and rigger, boilermaker, pattern maker, sampler (mine and cyanide), cyanide shiftsman, gardener, stoper or miner, drill sharpener, machineman, pipeman, trammer (underground and surface), millwright, sorting or crushing station overseer, hawker, shopkeeper, general or special trader, nor shall any immigrant hold a blasting certificate, or be employed in any clerical work on a mine or elsewhere.” (Applause.)

Effect of the Restrictions.

If such enactments become law, then I consider that your position would be rendered secure. Surely you do not imagine for a moment that I should be so blind as to advocate the possible eventual introduction of Asiatic labour if such introduction did not absolutely mean to the merchants, and to you miners, perfect immunity from competition, and absolute freedom from the danger that these labourers might settle in this country afterwards.

It has been said, and it will be said again, that we have kept back native labour because we wanted Asiatic labour. Now, let me tell you that Asiatic labour will cost us just as much as native labour costs us to-day, probably more. Moreover, look at the organisation necessary to bring in even 50,000 Asiatics to these fields. For instance, if we bring in Chinese, not only have we to repatriate them, but also in case of death to send their bodies to China. (Laughter.) The organisation necessary for carrying out such an undertaking almost frightens me and makes me sometimes wish that I had not such heavy responsibilities to my shareholders.

Now, you will admit that I have endeavoured to exhaust every argument on this question. The position I take up is that, as we have opened these fields, so must we continue, and that we can only carry on our work to the best advantage with skilled white labour, and unskilled coloured labour. Look back at the figures I have given you to-day. We are short to-day of practically 90,000 to 100,000 boys. If we could secure this number, it would mean an increase of about 15,000 skilled white men, with their families.

The Critics.

Our critics, as you know, have said that the introduction of cheap coloured labour is only advocated for the purpose of increasing dividends. My reply is that it means infinitely more than this, that the value of these Fields as a producer, or as a foundation for the expansion of South Africa, depends upon the amount of ore that can be raised at a profit. The lower the working costs, therefore, the lower the grade of ore that can be worked and the greater will be the number of mines

open and the white men employed. Now, gentlemen, I have dealt most fully with, I think, the most important subject since the days preceding the war, and I am fully aware that in advocating this policy, I am a candidate for the position of the most unpopular man on the Rand, but I intend to fight for the principle which I lay down as follows:—That if, after reasonable time, it is unfortunately proved that there is not sufficient labour in Africa, then the door shall be opened for the introduction of Asiatic labour under the legislation which I have thus roughly laid down for you to-night. Thus our shareholders and the world at large will know that you are determined to restore this enormous industry to its fullest extent of production, an industry on which to-day the prosperity of the whole of South Africa is dependent.

Conclusion.

Now, gentlemen, the principle that I have put before you to-night may be at fault, but if I am wrong, I hope that the least you will do will be to believe that I am honest. I have proved in the days gone by that I have the interests of this country at heart, as deeply as any other man in South Africa and therefore I sincerely hope that you will endorse the resolutions as passed at the Bloemfontein Conference. This question will not be decided in a day; it will be discussed up and down the reef for many months to come, but I should like before closing to say to you that I always consider that my first duty is to my own men and to the residents of this district, who are so closely interested with us. I have, therefore, considered it my duty to come and tell you my ideas and my policy, so that, if mischief, misrepresentation and trouble arise, you can never turn round on me and say that I did not come to you and advise you what was for the best. (Applause.)

I thank you and Mr. Mather and the representatives of trade unionism for giving me such a patient hearing. I have guaranteed every man in this room immunity should he get up and oppose me. I appreciate a man who opposes me—provided he has got a good case. But whether he has a good case or bad, no harm shall befall him, no harm shall come to any man working in any of the group of mines under my control. (Loud applause.)

SIR GEORGE FARRAR said he wished to have free discussion and he invited Mr. Mather to speak. (Applause.)

Discussion.

Mr. MATHER said he had listened with pleasure to many of the remarks that had fallen from the lips of their gallant Chairman and spokesman. But he thought that the prophecies of the engineers—and he learned that the engineers were prophets for the first time in his life—should be taken with a little grain of salt. He was himself not interested in what the Conference at Bloemfontein had done, except that they had employed Trades Union Printers to print the circulars (applause and laughter). They were told that all sorts of conditions would be imposed on the Chinese, if ever they came here, which God

forbid. (Applause). They had Sir George's assurance (and they accepted that assurance) that he would see that the conditions were carried out. Although they lived under a beneficent despotism Sir George was not the despot, nor was he the Governor of the country. He represented important interests (hear, hear), and would only be one out of 29 or 30 to deal with the question. Those 29 or 30 gentlemen had to make the mines pay their shareholders, and while they wanted that the shareholders should have their fair share, they also wished that the workers—the men who had spent years of their lives in the country—should have their share of the good things. (Hear, hear). They must know that the Chinese were wily and cunning, and would drive their carriage and six through the stipulations that were made in respect of them. The conditions proposed were no guarantee whatever, and if they were allowed to come, they would soon declare themselves British subjects from Hong-Kong. They would have to be compounded, and as that was so not one of the merchants would get a small portion of the supplying of oil-rags and stewed dogs. (Laughter and applause). Would it help them, again, if they had to pay taxes for the police to manage the 50,000 Chinese? And there would be 15,000 in the gaols. Viewed from one point or another, they were determined that there should be no Chinese brought to work the mines of the Transvaal. (Applause). The Chinese would not work for a white contractor, or on the same work as a white man. On the American mines one white man was employed to forty yellow ones. The Chinese was a very different subject to the Kaffir. The Kaffir was honest, truthful, and reliable. (Laughter.) He was reliable, he maintained, because he had never sought to usurp the white man's work. The moment the yellow man was brought into competition with themselves so soon would they break through any stipulation that might have been imposed, and seek to oust the whites from their positions. (Hear, hear.) Whether at the front or on the platform he (the Chairman) had shouldered his gun, or come forward to face a hostile audience like a man. Should the meeting vote in favour of the Bloemfontein Conference resolutions, then no white man need apply for mining work or other positions in the Transvaal. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. T. PRYCE ROSSER then said: I think it has been clearly shown by Sir George Farrar that there is to be progression in the South African Mines.

This progression will be stimulated and maintained by the influx of capital and the supply of moderately paid coloured labour, supervised by white labour, which will be highly paid.

The census returns and estimates of population given at the Bloemfontein Conference from the various South African Countries, clearly demonstrates the shortage of native labour after due allowance has been made for the labour required at the ports of South Africa and other industries such as railway expansion and agriculture.

Much has been said about the possibility of introducing white unskilled labour, assisted by mechanical appliances, but on the mine I am connected with this has been given a fair trial over a period of

nine months, and has been found impracticable from an economic standpoint, the increased cost in comparison with native labour being £5 per foot in shaft sinking alone, notwithstanding the fact that the work in this instance was rapidly accomplished.

What, then, was the objection to the introduction of Chinese labour to supplement the present available native labour?

The merchants had argued that wherever it had been introduced that it had spread all over the country, producing finally immoral results, and they had also argued that the storekeepers and merchants, both great and small, had suffered through the consequent competition brought about.

In those countries, however, whose experience was the basis of their argument, the Chinese had been admitted without restriction, and had competed directly with the white man.

The Korean instance referred to by Mr. Mather in his circular, where such poor wages were paid, and where the whites formed such a small proportion of the whole, was an American concession in the Chinaman's own country under a Korean administration.

Now, Gentlemen, a "Korean administration with Russian influence is not the British administration." British administration was purer, stronger, and more undefiled than any Korean administration in existence, and I believe is fully capable of enforcing the limitations it is intended to impose on imported Chinese labour.

It has also been argued by Mr. Mather that the Chinese were proposed to be introduced to "supplant" the white man on the mines.

Now, Gentlemen, you have all heard the various occupations enumerated by Sir George Farrar in which a Chinaman will not be allowed to be engaged, and I consider it a sufficient guarantee for the immunity of the white employes from the Chinaman's competition.

In fact, the introduction of Chinese labour in sufficient numbers to start the existing idle mines, would mean the additional employment of one white man to every ten Chinese, so that 5,000 skilled men would be immediately provided for.

SIR GEORGE FARRAR: I will accept one to seven.

T. P. ROSSER, continuing: Then, in that instance, 7,000 skilled white men would be immediately employed.

The merchants who had grumbled so much at the idea of introducing Chinese labour would have flowing into their coffers by various channels practically the whole wages of the 7,000 skilled labourers whom the importers of Chinese labour had rendered possible and were absolutely secure from Chinese competition.

Without such importation of labour the corresponding number of white men could never be employed under the present system.

Was it not clearly an advantage—with a pure Administration—(always with that in parenthesis) to have the whole of the mines working by the importation of the 50,000 Chinese and the employment of 7,000 skilled white men, who, with their earning and spending capacity, would increase the welfare of the community?

The smaller traders, who cater principally for the natives, complain that their means of livelihood is endangered by the supplanting of the native by the Chinese, who are of no value as customers.

Gentlemen, "It is never intended to supplant the native," but only to supplement him until the natural increase in the native population will cause his labour to be more abundant, the same number of natives will be employed, as heretofore, and so far from trade in any channel being reduced, it will be generally increased.

Moreover, I think that when the natives recognise that they are not indispensable they will come forward more freely, and the necessity for importing Chinese will gradually become less.

For a reasonable measure of growth in our industry (which for the present, at any rate, is the source of all prosperity in this country) it is essential to command a steady inflow of capital.

From three to four hundred millions sterling are invested here on the estimate of highly paid white labour and moderately paid coloured labour, and as this estimate is rendered void by the great shortage of native labour, the necessity of importing Chinese to allow of a reasonable return on this huge capital must appeal to you.

If you interfere with these economic conditions, and dam up the inflow of capital, the result will be disastrous on the prosperity of this country at large, for I consider that capital is as necessary to this country as water is to dry ground to make it productive, and your refusal to admit this labour will result in preventing all possible growth or advancement.

Mr. OUTHWAITE (White League) said he had not been long resident in this country, and could therefore not speak of the local conditions as could Sir George Farrar, but he claimed he could speak with greater authority on the conditions which were likely to obtain should they introduce Chinese labour, because he came from a country—Australia, where he lived 35 years—where it had been done, and where the people were striving as best they could to undo the mischief done by the former legislators. Up to the day he sailed from Australia he was trying to save a district from the ruin and degradation brought about by the introduction of these Chinese, who were brought there exactly by the specious arguments brought forward by Sir George Farrar that night. They were then told that restrictions would be framed to make their presence not hurtful to the general community, but the speaker pointed out the difficulty of keeping permanent control over such restrictions. The Chinese labour was cheap, and the restrictions were by degrees relaxed. The results of the introduction of the Chinese

were too horrible to contemplate. He argued that with Chinese labour spreading throughout the country they (the Chinese) could not be restricted. It must be remembered Chinese were not Kaffirs. The Chinese had a higher intellectual development, and were capable of imitating the white man in every possible pursuit; they would indeed be "skilled" men, for they must remember the skill of the Chinaman as a labourer. Proceeding, the speaker referred to the question of Japanese labour. He said they could not treat the Japanese except as the allies of Great Britain, and if the Japanese came here they must be given equal opportunities to Britishers. That was another instance of the danger which the question presented. The speaker also pointed out that in the case of a universal strike the Chinese would be able to step in as substitutes for the workers. The whole idea of Chinese labour was one of too great a danger.

MR. CONSTABLE said—Reference has been made to the Boksburg merchants and their vigilant propaganda against the Asiatic.

The East Rand has protested against the flagrant violation of the country's laws by officialdom in granting new licences to Asiatics to trade outside locations, and it is pleasing to note that while Government maintains a mysterious indifference to the public voice, others are wise enough to take a timely note.

The protest of the East Rand has been as unanimous as it has been emphatic, and if I judge the mind and temper of the Transvaal aright, I venture to say that our protest is the protest of this Colony.

We have said that we consider the presence of the yellow man here as a trader inimical to our interests, and as the law of the country provides for his being restricted to locations, we intend as far as this district is concerned, that the law shall be carried out.

It is believed that this district has fewer Asiatic traders than any other in the Transvaal, but we shall not be satisfied till we can say that we have none at all. Only a few days ago one of the last of these commercial parasites was summarily ejected from his den in Germiston, and I believe that other ejectments will follow, if not by official administration of the law, then by a law which the people will make unto themselves.

Now in spite of the mystery with which this matter has all along been enshrouded we knew that some scheme was maturing for the supplementing of the present unskilled labour now employed. By inference and surmise we gathered that the Asiatic was intended, and our experience of the results of his introduction to other countries led us to fear the worst.

We have assumed that what he has done for other countries he would quickly do for this. With prophet eyes we have foreseen the cursed consequences of introducing him here.

The veil has at last been drawn back, and the mystery revealed, and to my mind the substance is not so terrible as the shadow. For profiting by others experience the advocates of Asiatic labour have seen

to it that the dangers we feared from the introduction of the Chinaman shall be amply provided against in the scheme of indenture and repatriation.

However, I think we all agree that the economic and industrial needs of Africa would be least served by first obtaining the maximum of indigenous labour available. It is not argued that this has yet been done, and I hope that by better methods and improved organization the present and future needs of the mining industry will be amply met by African natives.

I confess that from the figures put before us to-night it would appear vain to hope for a solution of the great labour problem on these lines. But while I am not now prepared to question Sir George Farrar's statements, with others, I may be excused the hope that his conclusions are in some way based on false premises.

If, however, these figures are correct, or even approximately correct, we are confronted with a problem that is not to be summarily dismissed. It is on the contrary one that needs thinking out, not in the spirit of blind unreasoning prejudice, but in that of the patriotic regard for the best and ultimate interests of this country as part of our great empire. The proposition is so big and has such far reaching consequences that I do not think we are ready to-night to pronounce a verdict for or against the scheme.

Capital and labour as represented in mining and all industrial enterprise in this country agree that this country must be kept open for the white man. If, then, supplementary labour should ultimately become necessary, it is imperative that the interests of the white man should be safeguarded and guaranteed.

Much as I dread the advent of the Asiatic, I do not think such safeguards impossible if the conditions as to indenture and repatriation are stringently carried out.

"Yes," you will say, "but they will not be." Then woe to those who break them. It will not be long, we hope, ere the Government of this country will be in the hands of the people. They can then not only make their laws, but see that they are carried out.

And if, after you have, in the interests of the industry which means so much to you, allowed such supplementary labour to come in, you find pledges broken and the Chinamen being grafted on to branches of skilled labour, then expel him from the country lock, stock and barrel.

It is a great question and represents, shall I say, a crisis in the history of this country? Well, in all the crises through which our Mother Country has passed "the good sense of the English people" has saved her. In Africa, as this meeting testifies, there is a preponderating element of the same old stock, and I think Sir George Farrar was right when he elected in the first instance to refer the question to that tribunal as it is locally represented by the East Rand mining population.

But don't let us by indecent haste prejudice the case one way or another. If these fields were fully exploited at once for every situation now open to you skilled labourers, there would probably be six, and there would be a corresponding firmness in the rate of wages in consequence. If this can be done with the native labour of South Africa by all means let it be done and done quickly; but, if it cannot, then I believe that every sane man in this room would be in favour of some supplementary labour.

It would be premature to pronounce in favour of the Chinaman. But he is preferable to the Indian, who because of his adoption cannot be indentured and repatriated, and to the cheap European who you cannot expel and who would not only oust many of you from your billets, but would turn this country into a furnace of revolution in two years.

Mr. S. W. FURSEY emphatically opposed the idea of Chinese labour. He said that Sir George Farrar was one man, and he (the speaker) believed Sir George would honestly carry out the policy he had so ably laid down that night, but what could he do in the face of so many opponents? Out of deference, however, to Sir George Farrar, he would not move a resolution.

SIR GEORGE FARRAR: Excuse me, anybody can propose a motion, and is at liberty to do so.

Mr. FURSEY, continuing, said he was confident every evil they could think of would be brought into their midst if Chinese labour were introduced, and their wives and children would be ashamed of them if they allowed the importation of Chinese labour to be brought about. He moved the following resolution:

"That this meeting hereby says that we are opposed to the introduction of Chinese labour into the country as being inimical to the best interests of the Transvaal."

Mr. MATHER seconded.

Sir George's Reply.

The CHAIRMAN: Now, we have had a most interesting discussion, and I do not intend to put anything to the vote, because I think it is far better for you to go home and think the thing clearly over. I do not see any use in forcing a vote, especially if Mr. Mather does not wish to force one either. If you followed me carefully you will find that I have not once referred to the Chinaman, except when I mentioned his dead body—(laughter)—but you have revived him. The Bloemfontein Conference referred to Asiatic labour. We have heard a good deal about Chinese labour. Mr. Outhwaite has said that if we were wise we should get Japanese labour, and provided that it was indentured, I am in agreement with him. I am going to ask Mr. Mather about Indian labour—what position does he take up on this question?

Mr. MATHER: A British subject cannot be compelled to return to his country.

The CHAIRMAN: I know what you mean. You always beg the question. I mean provided they come in absolutely under proper Government control and are indentured out at the end of their term.

Mr. MATHER: I am opposed to the yellow man in any shape or form.

The CHAIRMAN: Well, that clears up that point. You have talked about Chinese labour, but no one can get away from my figures.

No Solution Offered.

And no one has offered a solution. I hope we shall find some solution, but in my opinion, the question has been begged to-night. There is a certain amount of agreement between us. It has been suggested to-night by Mr. Mather that we should drop the mines into the sea rather than have Chinese labour. Well, did not I say that except the Chinese are to come in under absolute Government control, and repatriated, I would be the last to agree to their introduction. Mr. Outhwaite has referred to the Chinaman in Australia. All I can say is "You got him in first and legislated against him afterwards." I propose to legislate first—(cheers)—and take lessons from your experiences in Australia, where you originally let him in as a free man. You have talked of the compound system, but you really must come to the point. Where is there the compound system less prevalent than in connection with these mines? You next say you are going to be swept out of the country, but I have already told you that I am prepared to accept the ratio of one skilled man to seven or eight unskilled labourers. I have not yet been taken for a fool, but I should be the biggest fool that ever lived if I brought in these people to your detriment. Mr. Mather has been rather rough on me about trade unions. There is no one more in favour of trades unionism than myself. (Applause.) Let the men combine to improve their condition. Is it not much better that the men should come and represent either to Mr. Hellman or myself their grievances through one or two speaking for all? And how have you trades union men treated me? I have helped you as far as I could, and I am accused of forcing my men into hell-holes on Sundays. (Laughter.) If they are hell-holes on Sunday, they are hell-holes on a week-day, and if a single man will stand up and say I forced him to work on Sunday, I will raise his wages if he is a good man. (Loud laughter.) After accusing me of this, then Mr. Mather writes asking me to become a patron of the Miners' Union. I understand he is no longer connected with your union. I suppose you have got rid of him because he asked such a disreputable person as myself to become your patron. (Laughter.) But, anyhow, we are in agreement on certain points to-night, and perhaps we shall come into line later on. Mr. Mather has not told us how he is going to settle the labour question. The main difference between us is that he is probably an anti-capitalist,

while I am, unfortunately, a pro-capitalist. I hear, however, he has a farm in Heidelberg District, through which the Coronation reef may run. (Laughter.) I hope, for his sake, it will run through, because he will then illustrate how he is going to work his Coronation reef. (Laughter.) Well, probably he will work it with cheap Italian labour—(laughter)—or become a brother capitalist with myself.

The CHAIRMAN then put the resolution proposed by Mr. Fursey, and seconded by Mr. Mather.

Sir GEORGE FARRER said: I declare the motion carried, but I see a great number did not vote. I am glad you have not yet all made up your minds.

Mr. MATHER then advanced to the front and proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Sir George Farrar for his able presidency over the meeting.

In seconding, Mr. FURSEY said he had had to take up this position because he represented a certain section of the community, and not because he was in an adverse spirit to Sir George.

The vote having been carried, Mr. MATHER called for "Three cheers for our gallant Chairman." These were given with the greatest possible heartiness, the room ringing with the enthusiastic shouts.

In reply, Sir GEORGE FARRAR said: I thank you for your attendance here to-night, and for your kind vote of thanks. We have had a most valuable discussion. You carried the vote against me, but the only thing is this—you have given me no remedy. I hope when we meet again you will have found a solution. You must think over it. We will meet in a month or two months time. Thank you again for your attendance.



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